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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was mailed to 802 Deans of Students in public two-year colleges during January 1977 in order to determine the extent to which religious counseling--that service dealing with a person's spiritual, moral, or ethical development--was available in community colleges. Of those surveyed, 68% responded. Results of the survey showed: (1) religious counseling was offered at the campuses of 39% of the respondents; (2) half of the Deans considered such counseling an appropriate college activity, although only 17% had professional, full-time religious counselors; (3) 293 colleges had various denominations of clergy or lay staff on campus to do religious counseling; (4) 127 colleges had some type of office, room, or secretarial help for the service paid for by external religious organizations; (5) 24 different religious organizations were identified as existing at various colleges, with 114 colleges citing the presence of nondenominational organizations, 68 citing the presence of Baptist groups, and 33 citing Mormon groups; (6) student religious groups were found to be primarily self-supporting, although 17% of the colleges permitted these groups access to student activity monies; and (7) 25 different courses dealing specifically with religion or religious studies were identified by respondents as being part of their curriculum. The survey instrument is appended. (JDS)

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RELIGIOUS COUNSELING AT PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

Dr. Don Nichols, Dr. Stephen Reckker, Rev. Robert Stuenkel

While the literature of higher education is replete with studies dealing with values, human interaction, and personal development, the two-year institution continues to be in need of additional study. This is particularly true in the counseling-guidance domain and even truer in the area of religious counseling. Although some articles are available on the topic at private, parochial junior colleges, the religious factor at public community colleges has been hardly examined. One notable contribution to the field is the work of Sleeper and Spivey.[1] However, little of the literature available speaks directly to the issue of religious counseling at public two-year colleges.

In an attempt to fill this void, a national survey of public two-year institutions was conducted during the 1976-77 academic year. The purpose of the survey was to determine the extent to which religious counseling is provided. Religious counseling was defined as "that service dealing with a person's spiritual, moral, or ethical development."

The Survey

A questionnaire was mailed to 802 Deans of Students (listed in the Junior College Directory) in January, 1977. Deans were selected on the assumption that their student personnel administrative responsibilities included the counseling function. The single mailing resulted in a return of 544 useable questionnaires (68 percent), indicating a somewhat high interest in the topic under study.

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Results

Using the definition of religious counseling explained on the questionnaire, 211 Deans (39 percent) indicated that this type of activity is offered at their campus. Those not providing this service employ outside agencies (55 percent) for student referrals.

As to the appropriateness of this activity, the Deans were equally divided; 256 Deans (49 percent) considered it an appropriate activity while 256 did not. While a large number of the administrators indicated approval for religious counseling, very few (17 percent) have professional, full-time counselors involved in this activity.

A number of institutions have members of the clergy or lay staff representation on campus to do religious counseling. One hundred twenty colleges had Protestant staff available, 110 reported Roman Catholic representatives, 35 had Jewish, 13 reported Eastern (non-Christian or Jewish), and 15 indicated "other" with such examples as nondenominational, Bahai, and Islam.

One purpose of the survey was to examine facilities and support provided for religious counseling on campus. One hundred two colleges provide office space, 155 offer meeting rooms, and 48 make some type of clerical assistance available. Some colleges apparently have arrangements with outside religious groups to fund these services. A total of 127 colleges have some type of office, room, or secretarial help paid for by external religious organizations. In a few cases these expenses are shared by several participating groups.

Another interest of the survey was the number and variety of formally

organized student religious clubs and organizations existing at the public two-year colleges. Twenty-four different religious organizations were named by the respondents with the "nondenominational" category being the most frequently listed (114). Leaders in the specific areas were Baptist (68) and Mormon groups (33). Included in this student diversity were such groups as Newman Clubs, large Protestant denomination groups, Campus Crusade, Inter-Varsity, Moslem, and Hindu.

Survey results show that student religious groups are primarily self-supporting; 200 Deans reported this funding arrangement. However, 95 (17 percent) colleges permit these groups access to student activity monies. Another source of funds is off-campus religious bodies, according to 104 (19 percent) of the two-year college respondents.

While the primary emphasis of the survey was in the student personnel and student activity areas, one question dealt with curricular matters. Respondents were asked to list courses dealing with religion specifically or with religious studies. According to the results, World Religions courses lead the list at public two-year colleges with 121 Deans indicating their availability to students. Other frequently-named courses included Literature of the Bible (62), Old Testament (59), New Testament (56), Comparative Religions (59), Philosophy of Religion (34) and Christianity or the Life of Christ (24).

A total of 25 different courses were included in the Deans' responses and with the above, ranged from Oriental Religions to Science and Religion. Of additional interest were such titles as Religious Foundations of the United States, Religion and the Meaning of Existence, Civil Religion, Islam,

Sociology of Religion, History of Religion, and Psychology of Religion. A few of the colleges offer similar courses for non-credit as part of their community services programs.

Summary

From the results of this brief survey it appears that religion is alive and well on the campuses of the nation's public community colleges. And, at a time when there is much discussion on changing values and personal adjustment, there certainly is a need for further study in this particular area.

Reference

Sleeper, C. Freeman, and Robert A. Spivey, eds. The Study of Religion in Two-Year Colleges. Published for the American Academy of Religion by Scholars Press, 1975.

NATIONAL STUDY OF RELIGIOUS

COUNSELING AT PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

SURVEY DEFINITION: For purposes of this survey religious counseling is defined as that service dealing with a person's spiritual, moral or ethical development.

I. Is religious counseling, as defined above, offered to students enrolled at your campus? Yes___ No___

II. If no, are referrals made to outside agencies for this type of counseling? Yes___ No___

III. Do you consider this type of counseling an appropriate function of your institution? Yes___ No___

IV. Does your college offer courses dealing with religion specifically or religious studies?

List those available:

_____

_____

_____

V. If answer to question I above was yes, please respond to the following:

1. Is religious counseling provided by your professional staff (i.e. full-time Guidance and Counseling staff)? Yes___ No___

2. Is religious counseling available from clergy, lay staff(non-clergy), etc. on campus?

If yes, designate specific types and numbers. (Indicate P-T or F-T)

RELIGIOUS GROUP	CLERGY	LAY STAFF (Non-clergy)
Catholic	_____	_____
Protestant	_____	_____
Jewish	_____	_____
Eastern(Non-Christian)	_____	_____
Other Religion	_____	_____
(Specify _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

(OVER PLEASE)

3. Are facilities and support staff provided for religious counseling and program staff by the college or outside groups?

	College provided	Funded by outside source
___ Office space	_____	_____
___ Clerical assistance	_____	_____
___ Meeting rooms	_____	_____
___ Separate building	_____	_____
___ Other (Specify)		
_____		

* Please asterisk any of the above located off-campus.

4. What formally-organized student religious-type clubs and organization exist at your campus? Be specific, indicate membership, if available:

		Membership
Catholic	_____	_____
Protestant	_____	_____
Denomination	_____	_____
(Specify)	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Jewish	_____	_____
Eastern	_____	_____
Other (Specify)	_____	_____
	_____	_____

5. If Student groups are in existence, how are they funded?

___ Student activities fees
___ Self-supporting
___ Supported by off-campus religious body, group, or denomination.

We would appreciate receiving any pamphlets, brochures, and publicity materials dealing with this topic at your campus.

Would you like to have a copy of the Survey results?

Thank you for helping with this Survey! Return to:

Dr Don Nichols
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DDN/pjw

The Authors

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